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AUTHOR Larson, Pamela A.
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ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit, designed for a Spanish I class at the high school level, explores the Olmec, an ancient civilization in Mexico. The unit aims for students to develop an appreciation for early civilizations and their importance to the present day. It gives seven objectives for students to work toward and lists detailed strategies for accomplishing these objectives. The lesson plans in the unit present a 7-day schedule for students to deepen their knowledge of the Olmec. Included in the unit are questions for the teacher to evaluate the students' knowledge, a sample "word web," guidelines for mounting an attention-getting bulletin board that focuses on the Olmec, and an examination. Contains an Internet resource list and a 23-item bibliography. (BT)

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ED 438 235

The Olmec Civilization

A Unit for Spanish I

Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad Program 1999

"A Survey of Mexico's Educational, Cultural, and Regional Diversity from both Historical and Contemporary Perspectives"

SO 031 435

Pamela A. Larson
Spanish Teacher
North High School
2700 Mercury Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54703
(715) 839-6227
plarson1@ecasd.k12.wi.us

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INTRODUCTION: This unit was designed for a Spanish I class at the high school level. This class is a block class that meets for 94 minutes every day all year long. At semester, the Spanish I is completed and Spanish II begins. The class is made up entirely of Freshmen. The class has a range of abilities from beginner (no previous second language learning) to advanced Spanish I (a student who has had previous second language learning in this level). The class moves quickly and is driven by the students and teacher alike.

OBJECTIVES:

- Explore an ancient culture.
- Develop an appreciation for early civilization and their importance to the present day.
- Utilize high level thinking skills.
- Implement the use of technology to access information.
- Organize learned information in a personally
- Use prior knowledge regarding the geographical settlement of a civilization to predict the best area for success.
- Teach peers about the Olmecs.

STRATEGIES:

- Recall of prior knowledge.
- Search and share information between students and teacher.
- Word web organizing information from Internet and other sources.
- Lecture
- Use of a HOTLIST to aid the filtering of information from the Internet. (http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/listloslomepa.html)
- Lecture
- Facilitating discussions, question-answer sessions, bulletin board creation, and the word web creation.
- Skimming printed material for main ideas.

NOTES:

The students enjoyed most the creation of the bulletin board. I have made changes to the unit from it's original conception. I find that this is a good place to begin talking about Mexico. The exam will go through more changes. The bibliography will continue to grow and I will continue to add to the hotlist. The original worksheet was too long and has been shortened. I found it better to not place the questions in categories, but rather allow the students to work on their higher level thinking skills and apply new knowledge in many ways. I highly recommend the use of a hotlist when assigning students to research using the Internet. They are easy to create and the students save valuable time. During this unit I used my personal photographs and books on the Olmec. The books listed in the bibliography have wonderful pictures.

Lesson Plans: Los Olmecas

DAY 1

~ Assess prior knowledge regarding Mexico (in general) and the civilizations of Mexico.
- Use brainstorming list.

~ Watch the video of the Mexico 100 Facts about Mexico or Mexico's Museum of Anthropology or other video from school's library.
- Use worksheet included online from publisher.

~ Discuss video to check for understanding and to spark discussion.
- Steer discussion towards the Olmecs.

~ ASSIGNMENT: Find information regarding Mexico that has been published, read it, and share the information with the class.

DAY 2

~ Share information found for homework from yesterday.

~ Internet Searching
- Search the Internet for the answers to the questions on the worksheet (Los Olmecas: The Rubber People).
- Use search engines for the first twenty minutes and then use the "hotlist". The address is provided to the students by the teacher.

DAY 3

~ Search of the Internet sources and completion of the worksheet continues.

~ Worksheet is due for tomorrow.

DAY 4

~ Discuss the information and knowledge gained from the Internet activity.
- Categorize the information.
- Demonstrate the word web by using the teacher as the subject.
- Using the word web about the teacher as a model, select categories of information about the Olmecs and begin a word web. (This will be added to as the unit progresses.)

~ View maps of Mexico (Gulf Coast area) that specify the climate, geographical features, and vegetation.
- Select in groups the best location for a capital or major city center.
- Discuss reasons for this location.

~ Assignment: Create three trivia questions in each of the chosen categories from the word web to be used in the class game of Jeopardy.

DAY 5

~ Discuss photographs or pictures from books on the Olmecs.
- Recall information from the Internet activity.
- Expand this pool of knowledge.

~ Compile a list of the questions.
- Students receive one participation point for every question that is not repeated by another member of the class.
- Teacher will rank the question of each category in order of difficulty and type for the following review day.

~ Bulletin Board
- Objective is to teach peers about the Olmecs through the use of a 5' X 12' bulletin board.
- Brainstorm how to achieve this objective.
- Once the brainstorming session slows down or stalls, hand out the guideline sheet.
- Mutually agree to individual responsibilities, information to be presented, and the process.
- Complete responsibilities for the following day.

DAY 6

~ Create the bulletin board.
- Bring ready materials and other finishing materials.
- A second day may be required for some classes.

~ Explain the layout of the exam tomorrow.

~ Play Jeopardy with the questions created by the students (the teacher should add her/his own questions to the student's questions.

DAY 7

~ Quick final review to refresh knowledge of the Olmecs

~ EXAM

~ Place finishing touches on the bulletin board.

LOS OLMECAS

KNOW	WANT TO KNOW	LEARNED

Los olmecas

The following questions need to be answered through the use of Internet sources or through information that you have gain through this unit. Some questions may not require a source in order to answer it completely. In other words, think through what you have learned and form an answer. If you have any questions, ask your teacher for clarification.

1. Define the following terms:

A. civilization

B. mesoamerica

C. pre-Columbian

D. basalt

E. were-jaguar

F. Olmec

G. Megalithic

2. What was (were) the capital(s) of the Olmec civilization?
http://_____

3. What are the different names given for the Olmec?
http://_____

4. What is the geographical location of the Olmec civilization?
http://_____

5. What type of Olmec artifact was found in 1862? How was it discovered?
http://_____

6. Although many consider the term "mother culture" to be a misleading term, why is it used to describe the Olmec culture?
http://_____

7. The Olmec civilization arose sometime between 1200-1000 BC. What was happening in other parts of the world during this same time period?
http://_____

8. Who might the colossal heads (cabezas colosales) depict?
http://_____

9. When did the Olmec civilization disappear?
http://_____

10. What natural resources did the Olmecs use?
http://_____

11. How did the Olmecs feed themselves?

http://_____

12. Draw an example of what a mound cluster might have looked like.

http://_____

13. What are some of the gods or animals associated with the gods according to the Olmec beliefs?

http://_____

14. How have modern people learned about the existence and the lives of the Olmec people?

http://_____

15. Describe what the megalithic (colossal) heads (cabezas colosales). Include the material used, where the material was located, and how much they weighed.

http://_____

16. What are the different theories on the origin of the Olmec civilization? In other words, where did the people originate?

http://_____

18. V o F The Formative Period or Pre-Classic Period begins with the first appearance of pottery and ends with the rise of Teotihuacán.

http://_____

19. What was the most important center or city for the Olmec civilization?

http://_____

20. Give an example of the hieroglyphic writing system described by C. A. Winters.

http://_____

21. Why was La Venta an excellent choice for a capital city?

http://_____

22. How do we know that animals were important to the Olmecs?

http://_____

23. V o F Basalt is found within the geographic region of the Olmec civilization.

http://_____

24. What did the Olmecs build? Include items they may have built.

http://_____

25. What is the oldest known monument or artifact of Pre-Hispanic Mexico?

http://_____

26. What do the helmets and their inscriptions on the megalithic heads (cabezas colosales) appear to be?

http://_____

27. After visiting the National Geographic web site, state how the Olmecs may have transported the basalt figures to their cities.

http://_____

28. Who is believed to have damaged or destroyed Olmec artifacts?

http://_____

SAMPLE WORD WEB
(beginning)

BULLETIN BOARD GUIDELINES

- Have the students think about what the bulletin board should do.
- The students should decide what they want to share with the other classes.
- Students select how the bulletin board should be designed, what the role of each member of the group should be.
- The students love being in charge. They will decide what materials they need, how they will obtain the materials, etc.
- The teacher leads the discussion, but the students drive the decisions.
- The teacher will provide the materials that they students ask for in advance.

The bulletin board should:

- Draw the attention of the viewer to the information by using interesting and eye catching visuals.
- Address the most important and interesting aspects of the topic.
- Utilize the talents of all of the students.
- Build off of the word web.
- Be evaluated by the teacher and possibly other classes.
- Be completed before the end of the unit.

BULLETIN BOARD EVALUATION:

Participation	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Materials	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Quality	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Creativity	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

TOTAL A B C D F _____/40

Exam: Los Olmecas

I. Define the following terms in complete sentences: (3 points each)

A. basalt:

B. were-jaguar

C. Olmec

D. civilization

E. mesoamerica

II. Matching: Match the terms on the left with the most appropriate term or phrase on the right. There may be an answer that is not used and /or used twice. (1 point each)

1. _____ cabeza colosal	a. prior to Chris' arrival
2. _____ rubber people	b. megalithic heads
3. _____ pre-Columbian	c. name for the Olmec
4. _____ La Venta	d. Olmec capital
5. _____ San Lorenzo	e. Mexican state

III. Answer the following questions completely. Support your answer. (5 points each)

1. Why are the Olmec considered to have been the "mother culture"?

2. Approximately when did the Olmec civilization cease to exists? Why?

3. What were the natural resources of the Olmec? How did they use them?

4. What was uncovered in 1862? How was it found?

5. How many Olmec capitals were there? What are their names? In what present day state was the Olmec civilization located?

IV. Essay: Answer <u>two</u> of the five essays below. Make sure that you answer in the form of a paragraph and that you use an introductory sentence and a concluding sentence. (10 points each)

1. Describe the "cabezas colosales". Who do they represent? What are they made of? How was the material that they are made of brought to their current location. Use detail.

2. What was the geographic location of the Olmec civilization? Why did they choose this location? (Give the positive and negative aspects of the location.

3. Draw an example of a mound cluster and a cabeza colosal.

4. How have modern people learned of the existence of the Olmec civilization? (INTERNET IS NOT THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER: Consider our classroom discussions!) Why is it important to study it?

5. There are different theories as to how the Olmecs came to be in Mexico. Which do you believe to be the most logical? Support your answer.

Los Olmecas: Rubber People

An Internet Hotlist on Los olmecas

created by Pamela Larson
Eau Claire North High School

Introduction | Photographs | Culture & Art | Language | Civilization | Rituals

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Introduction

Spanish students you will be using the following sites to begin your discovery of the Olmec civilization.

The Internet Resources

Photographs

- Brown Pride Online: Olmecs: Mexico's Mother Culture - The Olmecs, their name comes from the Indian word ulli, or rubber, ands means 'inhabitants of the country of rubber.'
- The Olmec by David C. Grove - The magnificent colossal stone heads, massive altars, and sophisticated anthropomorphic and zoomorphic statues found at Olmec sites in southern Veracruz and Tabasco, are the oldest known monuments in Prehispanic Mexico.

Culture & Art

- The Olmecs: Pictures, Descriptions, and Culture - Four different sites that will help with the understanding of the Olmecs of Mexico.
- The Rubber People - The Olmecs are considered by many to be the forerunners of all the ancient mesoamerican cultures. They were known as the rubber people. They are best known for their sculptures of huge heads. Because these massive heads have asian looking features, the Chinese claim that Chinese sailors must have come to the new world two millennia ago.

Language

- The Decipherment of the Olmec Writing System - We summarize the decipherment of the Olmec writing. It explains that Olmec is a syllabic writing system used in the Olmec heartland from 900 BC- AD 450. The decipherment of the Olmec writing of ancient Mexico provides us with keen insight into the world of the Olmec. These earliest text written in America, helps us to understand the culture religion and politics of the Olmec.

Civilization

- The Olmecs of Tabasco and Veracruz - This culture florishes between the year 1200 B.C. and 600 A.D. in

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